

**Peer Counselling in Higher Education –
Participants' Experiences of a Programme in Hong Kong**

Jennifer Yim Shui Wa

Doctor of Education

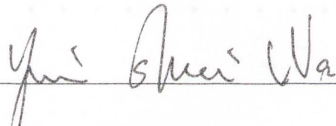
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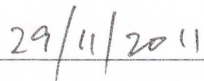
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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. Besides, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.


Signature of candidate


Date

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Abstract

According to Conger (1991), peers play an important role in the psychological and social development of adolescents. This study focused on exploring participants' perceptions and experiences of joining a peer counselling programme, which was preceded by training, and implemented for twelve months in the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The research methodology utilised was a qualitative case study of 30 peer counsellors and 16 counselees who comprised the research cohort and who provided data in in-depth focus group interviews. Descriptive analysis was employed throughout the study, which analysed counselees and peer counsellors as separate groups. The general importance of peer counselling, the training programme, the perceived peer counsellor role and the characteristics of the ideal peer counsellor were explored to provide a holistic view of the programme. The process of interaction, the "what" and "how" phenomena of the peer counselling services, was investigated among both peer counsellors and counselees in the study.

The findings indicated that both peer counsellors and counselees had known about the existence of the Peer Counselling Training Programme. All first year counselees perceived peer counsellors' roles to be paramount. As a group they desired their ideal peer counsellors to be helpful, caring, approachable, kind and patient. The first year counselees perceived peer counsellors as their sharing partners and role models. Results showed that the Peer Counselling Training Programme also had an impact on the personal and professional development of the peer counsellors.

The findings of the study confirmed that peer counselling had effects which were significant and beneficial for all participants, both the peer counsellors and those being counselled. In light of the findings, implications of peer counselling for Hong Kong tertiary institutions, recommendations, significance of the present study as well as its limitations are discussed.